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United States Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service

Fishery Leaflet 158

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PACIFIC OCEANIC FISHERY
INVESTIGATIONS

Chicago 54, Ill. December 1945

SOME METHODS OF FISHING SHARKS 1/

(Extracted from "Preliminary Report of the Shark Investigations at Big Pine, Fla." 1924, by Elmer Higgins, Chief, Division of Fishery Biology)

Nets.--Gill nets are used chiefly in fishing sharks at the Big Pine station. These nets are about 100 fathoms long and of various depths from 10 to 20 feet. They are built of No. 72 cotton twine, 20-inch mesh, hung evenly on a hemp or manila head rope of 1/2-inch diameter strung with ordinary 3-inch cork buoys at about 3-foot intervals, and a foot rope of about 3/8 inch diameter weighted with 4-ounce leads. Each section of net is fished separately, being anchored at each end across the tidal currents. The nets are marked with buoys and also flags on 15 or 20 foot bamboo poles, buoyed and weighted to stand upright in the water so as to be visible from quite a distance.

Trawls.--Trawls are also employed, though not so successfully as nets. The trawl consists of a heavy line (1/2-inch or 5/8-inch in diameter) anchored and buoyed at each end, to which are attached a series of hooks by means of snoods or leaders of light chain three feet long. The chains are snapped with heavy harness snaps into rings in the head rope placed far enough apart to prevent tangling. The hooks are of heavy steel 4 inches from barb to shank, with 8-inch shanks. Turtle is the most desired bait, but shark meat and fish are also used.

Boats.--The fishing boats are of the Seabright dory type, built in New England. They are 35 feet long, 10 feet beam, and about 2-1/2 feet draught. They are powered with gasoline engines of from 16 to 20 h. p. decked over with removable engine-pit covers. The engine is placed near the stern, leaving a small cockpit for the operator who holds the tiller. The forward parts of the boats are open for carrying the catch. The boats are rigged with stout 10-foot masts and booms with tackle for hoisting the sharks aboard. Three men make up the crew, except when heavy catches are expected, when one more is added.

Fishing.--The boats leave the dock for the fishing grounds about 6:30 or 7:00 a.m., run to the grounds, locate the nets by the flag buoys, and start hauling them in. The buoy at the end of the first net is secured and the head line drawn up. The net, however, is not taken aboard in ordinary fishing, but the

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1/ This leaflet supersedes F.I.-247, issued by the former Bureau of Fisheries.

buoy is left floating and the net is allowed to remain anchored. The fishing boat is merely pulled along by the headline of the net until an entangled shark is found, when the net is seized to the boat by a short rope, a hook placed in the mouth or gills of the dead or exhausted shark, or a sling about his tail, and he is hoisted aboard. The net is then cleared and returned to the water.

Six nets are fished by each crew daily. Every third day two nets are taken to the shore station for drying and mending, and replaced by two from shore, so that each net remains in the water nine days. No method of preservation of the nets is employed.

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